

ASSESS AND BUILD CONTENT KNOWLEDGE

K-W-L, K-W-L Plus, B-K-W-L-Q



What Is a K-W-L?

A K-W-L (Ogle 1986) is an instructional tool for helping readers engage in active thinking and reading by articulating what they already *know* about a topic (K), deciding on *what* they hope to learn from their reading and inquiry (W), and highlighting or summarizing what they *learned* (L) after their reading.

When and Why Would I Use a K-W-L in My Classroom?

Using the instructional strategy of a K-W-L provides many benefits for you and your students. As students generate what they already know (K) about the topic, they activate their own background knowledge as well as build background for their peers. In this process, you are able to assess what you need to teach or help students learn about the concept to be studied. From their background knowledge, students develop lists of questions about the topic for which they would like to find answers as they read and research (W).

When the reading and research is completed, students can revisit their questions to see which have been answered and what they have learned (L) in their reading. Students can then map the collective body of information in their K-W-L to synthesize what they have learned about this topic (K-W-L Plus).

In the Classroom

When using the K-W-L with my students, I found that I needed to add two categories: B for building background knowledge and Q for new questions after our initial reading and prior to further reading and research. For example, when my students and I were exploring the Hindenburg together, we used the graphic organizer B-K-W-L-Q (see Appendix). In the first column students described or drew something about

the Hindenburg as I read a selection from Harrison Powers's book, *Buried Alive!*, titled "The Last Moments of the Hindenburg."

We then used the K-W-L part of our graphic as we would have after using this background to lead us into reading about the Hindenburg from a picture book on the Hindenburg. When our knowledge base was summarized (K), questions posed (W) and answered (L), we then added a list of new questions we had after the additional reading. For example, the picture book implied that the Hindenburg event remains a mystery that might have been an act of terrorism. This inspired questions that pushed students into more reading and inquiry.

Research/Origins

- Carr, E., and D. Ogle. 1987. "K-W-L Plus: A Strategy for Comprehension and Summarization." *Journal of Reading* 30: 626-631.
- Ogle, D. 1986. "K-W-L: A Teaching Model That Develops Active Reading of Expository Text." *Reading Teacher* 39: 563-570.

References/Further Reading

- Blachowicz, C., and D. Ogle. 2001. *Reading Comprehension: Strategies for Independent Learners*. New York: Guilford Press.
- Powers, H. 1983. "The Last Moments of the Hindenburg." In *Buried Alive!* Mahwah, NJ: Watermill Press.

B-K-W-L-Q
(Adapted from Ogle 1986)

**Build
background**

**What do I
know?**

**What do I want
to know?**

**What did I
learn?**

**What new
questions do I
have?**

KWL Strategy Sheet

Name _____

What We Know	What We Want to Find Out	What We Learned/ Still Need to Learn

Categories of Information We Expect to Use:

A.

B.

C.

D.